



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

HIGHER EDUCATION & ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 24, 2009

Proposed H.B. No. 5691 AN ACT CONCERNING POSTSECONDARY TUITION ASSISTANCE AND SPECIAL NEED SUBSIDIES FOR ADOPTED CHILDREN

The Department of Children and Families offers the following comments regarding **Proposed H.B. No. 5691 AN ACT CONCERNING POSTSECONDARY TUITION ASSISTANCE AND SPECIAL NEED SUBSIDIES FOR ADOPTED CHILDREN**. This bill would appropriate funds to provide postsecondary education assistance up to the full cost of tuition at The University of Connecticut at Storrs for children who are adopted through the department's foster care program or who are participating in the department's subsidized guardianship program. The bill would also prohibit DCF from considering the date on which a child is adopted when calculating a special need subsidy and require the department to extend the special need subsidy until an adopted child reaches age twenty-three, provided such child is enrolled in a secondary or postsecondary education program deemed appropriate by the commissioner.

This bill codifies many existing practices of the Department. However, to the extent that it goes beyond these practices, a significant fiscal impact would result. For example, DCF provides (or will provide when they graduate high school) all children adopted from the state's foster care system on or after January 1, 2005 with postsecondary educational assistance. This commitment is included in the adoption agreements. This assistance is capped at the total cost (tuition, room and board, fees) of attending UConn Storrs (currently \$18,842). Unfortunately, children adopted prior to 2005 are not eligible for any postsecondary assistance.

Youth from the subsidized guardianship program are not eligible for any specific assistance for the cost of any postsecondary program; however, section 17a-126 of the General Statutes provides that the Department continue the monthly subsidy to age 21 for those participating full-time in a postsecondary educational or vocational program.

Regarding the calculation of the special needs subsidy, the date that the child is adopted isn't a factor in calculating any special needs subsidy. In many cases, the Department works with Adoption Assistance Program at the UConn Health Center in assisting adoptive families and in some cases we make adjustments to the special needs subsidy based upon the needs of the child. Currently, all adoption subsidies end at the child's 18th birthday. Extending these subsidies as proposed in this bill would result in a significant fiscal impact.